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Comparative study of the IT teaching / learning in school contexts: Lebanese and Moroccan

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Abstract

Currently, the world educational systems are convinced that the integration of information technology and communication is a research in compliance with the experiences of today's learners. The learners live in a society hyper computerized hence, they must be equipped with knowledge in computers. The computer course takes up more as an essential discipline in the school and university curricula. Lebanon and Morocco have set some very ambitious institutional specifications of computer discipline. In what measures have these objectives been met and how students perceive their learning in this area? The survey of young people simultaneously in Morocco and Lebanon tries to provide some answers to these questions.

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1. Introduction

Brought to live in a hyper "technicized" hyper "computerized" society, learners of today must have the knowledge and know-how to manage the complexity of this scientific and technological progress.

It is clear that currently, the computer is the main source of scientific and technologic innovation. Therefore, it is now recognized as school discipline in all education systems concerned supporting students to live in the present context. Computer course (IT) is a discipline providing a management of technology tools in constant development. Its importance that it is present in almost all areas of human activities, it does not renew only practical models but also often the concepts. Hence, this discipline is one of the first subjects taught at all levels of our educational system (Archambault, 2007; Baron, 2001).

In Lebanon as well as in Morocco, the computer course is now a compulsory subject for all three levels of college and secondary cycles' school qualification. 11 to 18 years old Lebanese and Moroccan students study computer courses during the most critical years of their schooling. In addition to the anchor values and social criteria, a

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college cycle represents a transition stage between primary and secondary qualifications. It sets as a goal the creation of a learner's technical skills mastering basic scientists, mathematical foundations, approaches to reflection… (MEN, 2005). In this context, the Moroccan educational system declares general and specific objectives commonly shared with the Lebanese education system and going in the direction of "preparing the future citizens of the knowledge society to become smart users" and not simply a "push-button" (Haeuw, 2002). These objectives include: the optimal using of ICT, solve problems, develop critical and creative thinking, encourage the use of these new modes of communication and promote self-learning ... (CNRDP, 2006, 2001, 2000, 1995; MEN, 2005).

The objectives and purposes declared in both Lebanese and Moroccan education systems are highly relevant and consistent with the expected profiles of the graduated students. But these goals are they actually achieved? This profound question is the origin of this work objective.

2. Methodology

In order to provide answers to our questions, we turned to the young Lebanese and Moroccan students. The objective of our research is to see if learners in the two countries perceive effectively the contribution of the discipline, if they feel that they have acquired the knowledge, skills and abilities expected. Therefore we sought to highlight the representations of computer and technology education induced. To do this, we developed a questionnaire of three sections: the first section targets are students' opinions about the contribution of the IT on the development of creativity, communication skills, immersion working life… In the second section, we focus on students' skills: programming, desktop application and using web services. By the third section questions, we tried to approach the different uses of the Internet and to estimate the time that students allocate to computer activities.

3. Samples

Moroccan population (sample **M**): As we want to have students who have completed all modules in the curriculum of computer courses, we chose a population of 370 students aged between 17 to 19 years in different sets of baccalaureate and belonging to different institutions.

Lebanese population (sample **L**): the Lebanese population is composed of 411 students, from the same ages and belonging to 11 different secondary schools.

4. Results

After the data collected processing, we have compiled the results in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The first two columns refer to the population of Lebanese students (**L**) and the last two columns show the results obtained for the Moroccan ones (**M**).

Table 1 : Section I

	Lebanon		Morocco	
	Disagree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**
1- The computer course has developed:				
. My creativity skills.	15,17	84,11	49	51
. My aptitude to resolve some problems.	22,1	75,15	79	21
. My aptitude to establish comparisons and measurements	27,77	62,02	85	15
2- The skills I have acquired through my computer courses taught at school would facilitate my university studies.	16,66	82,29	85	15
3- The computer plays an important role in the general culture of the individual and in the society.	0,86	98,92	22	78
4- IT courses taught at school play an important role in the labor market and in the production.	21,13	51,08	49,5	39,5
5- IT courses taught at school promote the use of the computer as a way of human communication.	22,53	77,64	70,5	29,5
6- The IT, as a discipline, is not necessary because the learner may acquire computer skills alone outside the school.	50,57	49,2	23	77

Table 1 shows that Lebanese students seem convinced that the IT as discipline enables them to develop a sense of creativity, the ability to solve problems and to establish comparisons. This result is reflected in the percentages of the modality response "agree" which is more than 60% in the three proposals to the question 1. In contrast, Moroccan students are convinced otherwise. Indeed, the percentages expressing their disagreement on the two first proposals on the skills and the assessments are very high, their appreciations on the creativity are more or less identical (49% agree and 51% disagree). The net difference between the two populations continues in question 2. Thus, contrary to Lebanese students, most of the Moroccans students (85%) do not see the contribution of the IT discipline to their further studies. This finding of the IT discipline "irrelevant" and "superfluous" for the Moroccan population is supported by the high percentage of the modality agreement in question 6 which states that computer skills can be acquired informally. It should be noted that in relation to this issue, the Lebanese are divided; only half of them believe that they can be formed outside the school. Moreover, the convergence of the two populations appears only at question 3 which focuses on the role of IT in today's society; both populations seem convinced of the importance of this discipline in modern society.

Table 2 : Section II

	Lebanon		Morocco	
SECTION II	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**
7- IT at school promotes you to apply advanced techniques on:				
. Word.	14,31	85,28	10,5	89,5
. Excel.	14,8	83	25,5	75,5
. Power Point.	7,93	91,86	92,5	7,5
. Data Base.	20,94	78,16	92,5	7,5
8- Using the Internet and the World Wild Web.	19,63	52,01	69	31
9- Producing applications combining different types of information using multimedia techniques and tools of communication networks in order to understand their usefulness.	38,16	60,47	87	13
10- Practicing of modern programming techniques.	37,33	61,7	95,5	0,5
11- Creating pages on the Web.	52,13	47,74	93,5	6,5

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the opinions of the two populations do not converge for the first two propositions in question 7 where students interviewed were asked to comment on the contributions of the IT as a discipline on their skills related to Word office and Excel. Indeed, around 90% of students felt they learned Word processing at IT school discipline in both populations. Similarly, 83% of the Lebanese population and 75% of the Moroccan sample recognize the positive impact of the IT discipline for the development of their spreadsheets skills. The divergence between the two populations is very clearly manifested in the responses to the proposals on their presentation skills and managing databases. Thus, the vast majority of Lebanese students (above 70%) believe that IT courses allowed them to acquire these skills. This situation is reversed in the Moroccan population where only 7.5% of students believe that IT literacy at school helped them to develop the ability of presentation and management of database.

In the following questions, in Section II, we tried to approach the feeling of students on to the main objectives formulated in the two educational systems, especially those related to the use of modern technology, web service ... For these issues, Lebanese students appear less assertive, positive percentages (agree) are scaled down but still very high compared to those of Moroccan students. In fact, the percentages expressing the disagreement obtained in the case of the Moroccan population was close to 100% for some questions, which raises profound questions about the teaching of this discipline in Morocco. Students' responses suggest that the contribution of the teaching of this discipline is approximately nil.

Table 3 : Section III

	Lebanon		Morocco	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Do you have a computer at home?	96,41	3,57	73	27
You use it?	90,47	8,67	94,5	5,5

Do you spend more than 5h/week on the computer?		45	55	32	68		
		Reaserches	**Chat**	**Facebook**	**Mails**	**Games**	**Others**
Sites you visit most -	Lebanon	17,32	26,46	25,9	23,8	6,7	0
Sites you visit most -	Morocco	21,4	27,2	23	22,28	4,66	1,5

The questions in Section III relate the rapport of students with computers (PC). Unlike the previous sections, the data obtained show optimal convergence on the opinions of the two populations. Indeed, even though more than three quarters of Moroccans and Lebanese students reported having a computer, 30% of them use it more than 5 hours per week, while only less than 10% (8.7% Lebanese and 5.5% Moroccan) say they do not. The two populations are also in perfect agreement on how they use the Internet; 75.5% of students in both samples, admit using the internet to chat and 65.5% admit that they are members of the social network Facebook. In fact, according to Table 3 the answers percentages concerning the above questions are almost identical in the two populations; about 70% of the students in both countries are very much attracted by the chat, Facebook and mailing. It is evident from these results that, although the Moroccan students are not satisfied with the contribution of the IT as school discipline, their attachment to the computer and the net is exactly similar to the Lebanese. This corroborates the fact that the similarity of the behavior of this generation native of the digital era ignores borders.

In conclusion, we can say that this preliminary study on IT education in Morocco schools unable to develop basic skills in this matter, it shows that the objectives announced in the official instructions are far from achieved. However, the Lebanese system happens to meet a large part of its objectives. This study also revealed that apart from the schools, the behavior of the two populations of the same age is approximately similar.

Further study on this topic is ongoing including the extension to other populations of different age groups and different countries of origin of the north and the south of the Mediterranean sea.

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